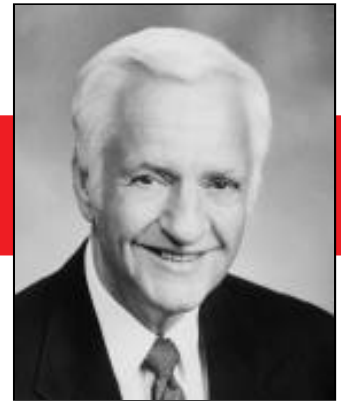


R E P R E S E N T A T I V E

Paul Zellinsky Sr.

D I S T R I C T 23

1997 Post-session Report



It's over! The most productive, positive, common-sense and taxpayer-oriented legislative session in recent history adjourned on schedule April 27 — the first time in 40 years an extra session wasn't needed to write a state budget. Not only does that save you, the taxpayers, money, but it also illustrates that we set our objectives, worked hard, smart, and with the governor, accomplished phenomenal success, and left Olympia in an unusually efficient manner.

We were motivated by a desire to reduce the size, cost and unreasonable expansion of state government. Those were the messages I heard from you during the campaign, and those were the messages other lawmakers had heard from their constituents as well. We listened to you. We planned. And we acted on property tax relief, education, welfare reform and juvenile justice.

I am very proud of the fair, practical solutions we developed to complex situations. With every vote (we considered over 3,000 bills during the session and approved about 10 percent of them), I thought about the calls and letters I received from you and conversations I had with constituents when I was doorbelling. I considered the responses you sent to my January questionnaire (see results inside) which further fueled my support for property tax reductions, welfare reform and juvenile justice reform. And I voted to represent all my constituents: Republicans, Democrats and independents.

I also support performance audits on agencies like the Department of Licensing, State Patrol and the ferry system so taxpayers and lawmakers gain assurance that taxes are being spent efficiently.

As you read the summary inside of some of our most important legislative accomplishments, remember that I want to continue hearing from you. My legislative assistant, Tim Attebery, will be in my Olympia office during the interim, and while I'll be back at work in Bremerton, I'll be in regular contact with him. So please, contact Tim with your thoughts and concerns so I can continue to represent you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Zellinsky Sr.".

Olympia office:

423 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
Phone: (360) 786-7934

Toll-free

Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TDD (hearing impaired):

1-800-635-9993

Committees:

- Financial Institutions and Insurance, *vice chair*
- Transportation Policy and Budget
- Health Care



► Tax reductions

Without question, the most personally satisfying vote I made during the 105-day legislative session was the one to reduce business and occupation taxes. As a Democrat representative in 1993, I was pressured into helping pass the largest business tax hike on service companies in state history. It's a vote I deeply regret, but also a vote I was extremely anxious to reverse. And I did. We passed a rollback of those B&O taxes which will save accounting firms and other small companies \$99 million next year, and more after that.

The B&O reduction was only one of more than two dozen tax reductions we passed that will save Washington taxpayers more than \$411 million in the 1997-1999 biennium.



Paul wears his B & O tax-cut button as he speaks during a committee hearing.

Respondents to my January survey said reducing property taxes was the single most important task the 1997 Legislature could accomplish. So I am pleased to report that the biggest reductions we passed were the property tax reduction measures that will save the owner of a \$110,000 home as much as \$23,000 over the life of a 30-year mortgage. Because the governor vetoed the largest part of these property tax reductions, however, we made sure to pass it again, this time with a referendum clause giving you an opportunity in the November election to reduce your own property taxes. I believe this is a move in the right direction for badly needed property tax reform. I am sure you'll take that opportunity to reduce your taxes, and I hope we continue with further reductions in the future.

► Operating budget

Because we share your desire to reduce the size and cost of government, we enacted a two-year state budget containing the smallest increase in spending in 25 years: 7.7 percent. Not only is it the smallest, it is \$112 million less than we're allowed to spend under Initiative 601, which limits increases to the amount of inflation plus that needed for population growth. About 78 percent of those of you responding to my January survey said, "Don't exceed I-601!"

The fiscal constraint we insisted on will save state taxpayers \$804 million over the next six years. That's because each year's I-601 spending limit is calculated using the current year's actual spending as a starting point. Smaller current spending translates into a smaller I-601 limit next time and the next time. This "multiplier effect" is an important point in our taxpayer-oriented budget strategy.

Our 1997-1999 budget has fairly been called an "education budget" because it puts education first. It allocates \$8.9 billion of the \$19.073 billion budget to K-12 education — that's a per pupil increase of \$168 over the biennium. We funded current programs at inflated levels and for more students, plus we provided \$323 million for new initiatives. The largest, of course, is a 3 percent salary increase for teachers (who also get automatic "step" increases regularly) and other employees. We also provided \$458 in discretionary money for every teacher to buy extra supplies needed in the classroom, plus funding to purchase computers and other technology and new instructional materials.

► Education

In addition to an "education budget," we passed a remarkable package of education policy laws we called the **ADCs of Education**, standing for **A**cademics, **D**iscipline, **C**ommunity Involvement and **C**hoice. Our core belief is that the Legislature needs to take the lead in establishing higher standards for basic academics: reading, writing, math, science and history. My January survey showed you feel the same. About 65 percent of respondents said our K-12 public school system does not provide a satisfactory education.

We also believe we need to establish a disciplined atmosphere in school buildings that allows children to learn without disruptions of a few unruly students. Bills giving parents and community members more authority over their schools were also included in our package.

I have been concerned about the lack of safety in schools. So I was very pleased that our discipline bills included one giving schools more tools to deal with gang activities,

1997 Post-session Report

intruders, drug and alcohol use, expulsions, dress codes and several other discipline issues.

► Juvenile justice system reform

While Washington state has reduced adult crime rates, the continuing increase in violent juvenile crime is a great threat to the safety of the families and neighborhoods throughout the state. Our flawed juvenile justice system has been too lenient.

The landmark juvenile justice reform bill we passed this session implements two fundamental changes:

- It gives prosecutors and judges the ability to ensure that every juvenile faces consequences for their actions whenever they break the law, starting with the first offense.
- It increases punishment for dangerous violent offenders.

Specifically, it requires 16- and 17-year-olds who have been accused of committing certain violent offenses to be tried in adult courts and receive adult sentences. Their violent offenses will make them eligible for "Three Strikes and You're Out."

The seriousness and sentencing guidelines of many crimes is increased. And restitution payments will now be encouraged and ordered regardless of the criminal's ability to pay.

I believe the reforms in this law will reduce juvenile crime and make us more secure and safe in our neighborhoods.

► Welfare reform

Many constituents who have contacted me have supported no other legislation as long and strongly as welfare reform. It was the second most important task my survey respondents asked the Legislature to accomplish. This session, after five years of trying, we were successful in changing the welfare system to reflect your values.

Work and personal responsibility are the centerpieces of our new welfare law. For the first time in the 60-year-old history of welfare, recipients of public assistance will now be required to work or seek work in order to qualify. Welfare will no longer be an entitlement. Recipients will be required to take personal responsibility for their own welfare because benefits for most people are now limited to five years. The previous system had no work requirement and no time limit.

Besides receiving a cash grant, those who work or look for work will also be eligible for increased child-care

assistance. Those who cannot find work will be assessed to determine what skills they lack to begin working. Then the state will provide job training, job-search assistance or other support to help them become employed. As they move up the economic ladder to self sufficiency, they will continue receiving the cash grants, child care and other benefits and incentives until they are on their feet.

This is historic change for Washington state, a change you have demanded for a long time. I am pleased to have had a role in making it happen.

► Transportation

Our \$3.3 billion transportation budget is the smallest in four years. A few road, bridge and ferry projects were funded, but many more are waiting for funding. Limited income prevents an aggressive infrastructure investment at this time. Instead of considering a gas tax increase to fund the projects (60 percent of you responding to my January survey said you did not support a gas tax increase), we'll be looking for alternative financing mechanisms during the interim.

► Seattle Seahawks' stadium

We received more letters, phone calls and e-mails on the Seattle Seahawks' stadium issue than any other. That surprised me. The vast majority of you asked to have the opportunity to vote on the funding package. In addition, about 80 percent of you responding to my January survey said you favored user fees, not statewide taxes, to fund the stadium. In response, I worked hard to put the best package available on the June ballot. In the last week of session, we were successful, and you will have your say June 17.

► Capital budget

The state's new \$1.8 billion capital construction budget we approved includes \$6.6 million for rebuilding the Olympic College library that was destroyed in the snow and ice storm last winter. The college and students there have been through some tough times since that happened, so I'm very delighted that we have won these funds to rebuild the facility.

Other 23rd District projects included in the budget include:

- \$298,150 for phase one renovation of Bremerton's Evergreen Park
- \$110,000 for the Kitsap Community Action Program to help with its building

Paul Zellinsky, Sr.

District 23

- ▶ \$253,000 to the city of Poulsbo for acquisition of the Nelson property as part of the aquatic lands enhancement program
- ▶ \$35,000 to remodel the Filipino-American Community Hall on Bainbridge Island

▶ Insurance

I want to clear the air and correct misunderstandings about my objectives as vice chair of the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee. My goal has always been to help consumers when I consider insurance legislation. I sponsored three bills that would keep automobile insurance rates down on coverages insurance companies are required to offer you: personal injury protection insurance (PIP) and uninsured motorists protection (UIM). Two of the bills passed the House only to die in the Senate. I will continue working for consumers next session.

PIP bills — people with PIP coverage on more than one car could collect PIP benefits from only one car's coverage and would not be able to double- or triple- or quadruple-dip when only one car is involved in an accident.

Uninsured motorist bill — allows insurance companies to write two types of uninsured motorist policies; (1) that requires the person causing the accident to use all his/her available liability insurance coverage before the victim's UIM coverage kicks in, or (2) does not require the at-fault party's liability insurance to be exhausted before the victim's UIM kicks in.

Basic Health Plan — we fixed the BHP's financial problems that could have bankrupt the low-income program had we not taken responsible action now. In spite of limited funds, we also expanded enrollment capacity by 8,000 families.

Another health insurance bill we passed would have helped stabilize the individual insurance market suffering from an exodus of companies offering the product. If companies continue to withdraw from the market, no individual insurance policies would be available. Reforms in the legislation would have provided rate increase guidelines, established an open enrollment period, established greater consumer protections, and more. However, Gov. Locke vetoed most of the bill. We will continue working on this problem over the interim and address it again next session.

▶ Pages

I was pleased to sponsor four teen-age pages from our district who each spent a week in the House helping us manage our paperwork. I think paging is a terrific opportunity for students to gain an appreciation for the Legislature and to participate in the operation of our government.

The four pages were:

Scott Durday from Silverdale;
Sheri Ann Hade from Kingston;
Andrew Dyke Wymer and
Jimmy Almond, both of Poulsbo.

Representative
Paul Zellinsky, Sr.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**1997 Post-session
Report**

BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing